

THE HAZEL GREEN HERALD.

SPENCER COOPER, Owner and Editor.

"Of a Hazy World, With News From All Nations Lumbering at His Back."

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Hazel Green

With Side Lights on Campton and Torrent.

SITUATE AMONG THE HILLS.

Scenes at a County Fair Catchingly Pictured.

APPLE BRANDY AND POPS.

Traits of Character and Customs of a Contented People.

UNDEVELOPED RESOURCES.

From the Courier-Journal.]

HAZEL GREEN, KY., Nov. 20.—(Special.) Jackson is one of those favored places the visitor doesn't want to leave. Not so much, perhaps, by reason of its extreme attractiveness, however attractive it may be, but rather owing to the solemn fact that he has to get up before daylight to catch the only departing train for the day. Still I managed somehow to do it, and in the grimy greenness of the dull gray dawn I told Maj. Jim Patrick good-by, and smiled a "howdy-do!" on Conductor Shelby as though I liked that sort of thing.

Then we slipped away to Torrent, where I was to make some kind of a connection with the Buckboard and Equine Air Line for Hazel Green and its famous fair. There I found Dr. Phipp, who had gathered together one of Taylor Day's magnificent Arabian steeds, pure bred and born tired, and a classic buckboard, and off we hied for Hazel Green, 20 miles away and all day to make it in.

But first let me say something about this romantic L. and E. station of Torrent. It is situated at the head of the great Natural Bridge canyon and there is no road out of it save the railroad and a fire escape up the side of the cliff. This fire escape is wide enough for lumber wagons and teams and also for buckboards, and as the stranger to that sort of driving creeps upward to the sky with his horse's hoofs digging holes in the rocks to hold by, he inadvertently (or some other way) thinks of the Cordillera and wonders how one of those South American mountain males would serve to pull a buckboard up this Torrent hill in winter, when the weather has got its work in as that incline, I'll bet the male wouldn't tackle it, preferring to back up against the cliff and just kick its way right through the solid rock. All about Torrent, and hanging down over it, are the rugged cliffs and the steep walls of the canyon, and so narrow is it that in winter there are only about four hours of sunshine to the day. There is no town there save lumber piles, a couple of stores, a hotel and a blacksmith shop, with the station and one or two small houses, but when the new L. and E. hotel is completed at Natural Bridge and there is a wooden tramway along the cliffs connecting both ends of the canyon for the pleasure of visitors, Torrent will sprout up and point with pride to her great torrential waterfall in the gulch back of the hotel, and in winter time she will show an ice cave with crystal stalactites and stalagmites that will make Niagara wonder what she was ever made for. That's the kind of a summer and winter resort this canyon will be one of these days.

Gaining the top of the Torrent hill under the skillful driving of Dr. Winn, who earned only inquired if my life was insured before we started, we followed the ridge through a maze of flaming torches of blazing gum trees (set on fire by the frost, you know), and looked far down into the valleys where the crimson and gold ran riot in the October sunshine over a million trees. Or something like that. It was very pretty, I am sure. But the roads. Wow! Dry as a chip and in prime condition to be worked between the winter strikes them and makes them impassable mudholes and seething morasses. But not a hand is raised anywhere to do a lick; not a sign of anything done to give the people a passageway, and the stranger is forced to the conclusion that those who use them as a regular thing don't know what a decent road is or wouldn't care to drive over one if they had it. And

the county judge is more to blame than anybody else for not making the people work the roads, if they won't do it without compulsion. The grades are all good, and a little care would cut the time to Hazel Green from the railroad just about half. Four miles an hour is the average time now in a buckboard, and any great excess of that would rack the immortal soul out of buckboard, driver and horse.

One starting place on the road, about half way to Campton, is High Falls, a precipice at the head of a hollow, where the man in his buckboard can look down into the top of trees 60 or 70 feet high, and where, if a horse shied and went over, which he would do on the first jump, he would go so far into the bowels of the earth that nothing short of Gabriel's trumpet would ever raise him out again. 25 feet of railing would make the place secure, but as nobody has yet gone over no necessity appears to exist for a railing.

We reached Campton, ten miles, about 1 o'clock. Campton is the county seat of Wolfe county, and has a population of 400. The county has a population of 7,000, and was established in 1801, at the same time the town was. It received its name from State Senator Nathaniel Wolfe, of Louisville, and the town was called Campton from the fact that it was located on Swift's Camp creek. This Swift is the same man who is, or was, the reputed owner of a silver mine located today in several hundred different localities in the mountain region of Kentucky, but not yet discovered. I am betting 10 to 1 that it will never be found. The creek lost the "Camp" portion of its name and is now Swift's creek, and a "ton" was brought in to complete the name of the county seat. The first noticeable characteristic of Campton is the number and extent of its brick buildings. There are 7 in all, one a business house, 120 feet long, costing \$10,000, now used as a hotel, another, the largest residence in the county, belonging to W. L. Hurst and costing \$5,000; another hotel, a courthouse, a jail and a few smaller ones. The bricks are all native, made on the spot, for it would cost about \$100 a brick to haul them any distance over these roads.

The first courthouse of brick was built in 1869 at a cost of \$11,000, and was burned in 1886. In 1888 a new one, costing \$7,000, was put up. It has a tower, but no clock. I'm beginning to think a town clock in the mountains would be a sign of progress, and hereby apologize to the entire town clock family for anything I may have said derogatory.

The jail cost \$6,100, and isn't much of a jail, for looks, at that price. There have been 2 legal hangings at Campton, 1885-87, the first men to be hanged in the mountains. There is 1 frame church in a good state of repair, owned by the Southern Methodists and used by all denominations on off Sundays. The Congregationalists flourish in this section, a sect not common in Kentucky, and they have a pastor and a church in the county. There are 3 stores in town and a grist, saw and carding mill, these latter under 1 capacious roof. A good business is done in the town, and there is a lot of money around, if you can get your hands on it.

The school house is of frame, costing \$750, and quite palatial compared with that of Beattyville, and the generous sum allowed by the grand old commonwealth for teaching the children is \$480 for 5 months. The people, though, are better than their state and they make up a pot for the rest of the time and hire the teacher for the remaining 5 months. And this is the place to hoorty for the good people of Campton and hold them up as an example to the authorities of the state, including our incomparable legislators.

Once more we whipped up and went jogging merrily along to Hazel Green, and at last at a turn in the road the little city burst upon our waiting vision and Dr. Winn burst into poetry:

"Oh, little city of the plain,
Enconced the hills between,
Kentucky would be quite in vain,
Had she no Hazel Green."

It was 4 o'clock, only 6 hours to drive 20 miles, when we drove into town and it was a rush of horses and wagons and mules and teams and 40,000 people, more or less, all starting home from the fair at once. And there was dust enough to have been subdivided and sold off in town lots.

We had missed our supper and when the supper bell rang over at Aunt Lou Day's tavern, I was feeling a little hollow-chested, but not for long. Such an epicurean layout I never did see—hot biscuits and honey, fried chicken and corn cakes, stewed chicken and cream gravy, with cold light bread, beefsteak and cold roast, mutton and fried pork, hot coffee and tea, sweet milk, sour milk and water, corn bread and hot rolls, new sorghum and old molasses, fresh butter, fried eggs, jelly cake and pound cake, 47 styles of preserves and 3 kinds of pie. Well, well, well, if that hollow-chested feeling didn't make itself scarce in a hurry, then

set me down as a prevaricator of the deepest dye. And it wasn't spread on a bill of fare to tempt one's syntax, either, but set right on the table where one could reach it with both hands. This reminds me that the mountain hotel keeper never stints his guests in the quantity of edibles he sets before them. It is nearly always good, too, though rather primitive in the manner of service. Sometimes it is bad, and when it is—Good Lord deliver us.

The next day we did the fair, and I am here to say the Columbian exposition isn't in it with the Hazel Green fair. They cut off the floral hall exhibition this year and made it mostly "hoss race," which should not occur again, for the women folks like to be represented and ought to be, but the people were there, and the people are most interesting than anything else to the outside visitor. Straight away, natural people are so scarce nowadays that when the artificial creature from the world outside gets in among a thousand or so Hazel-Green holiday folks it makes him feel as if the world were yet human and worth living in. They come down out of the mountains in their best bibs and tuckers, two on a horse, or by the wagon full, and they have more fun than anybody. Everybody is as good as everybody else, and the class distinction and the social prestige are unknown. All men are born free and equal in Wolfe county, and the Hazel Green Fair shows it.

The fair was first held in 1890, and declared a dividend of 24 per cent. This continued going up, some years as high as 40 per cent, until last year, when it dropped 10 per cent, and scared the stockholders so that they came near not having it this year. They braced up, however, and will come out about even. Now if those Hazel Green people let their fair fall through, may all the gods jump on them at once. There's a half-mile track, a big grand stand, a floral hall and a fountain of water piped down from the hill by Taylor Day, and to let it lie idle when they can have so much fun with it is a downright shame—that is if they conclude to let it lie idle.

Hazel Green is one of the oldest towns in the mountains, having been founded by William Trimble, who settled in this valley in 1814, giving a squirrel rifle, so it is said, for 500 acres of land, including the site of the town. He farmed awhile, then started a little store and laid off around it some streets. The Rev. Joseph Nickell, who had lived in Hazel Green, Ala., happened along about this time and gave the name of his Alabama town to the new town in Kentucky, and that name has stuck with it. It's a pretty one, too, and the Rev. Joseph Nickell was a fine preacher. The town has a population of 350 and is situated on three streets, chiefly Main, State and Academy. These latter two go by the name of "Back Streets," the residents of each referring to the other as "Back Street" people. This grew out of the opposition of the State-street people to the opening of the new street, and so they went to "back slapping" each other, so to speak.

The town government is vested in the hands of a police judge and a town marshal, and they are not kept very busy as a rule. There are three churches, Methodist, Presbyterian and Christian, costing from \$1,500 to \$2,500 each, with no regular pastor.

Educationally, Hazel Green is on top, and not because the grand old commonwealth has done anything in that line either, for as usual it hasn't. There is a brick school house in a fine lot donated by the founder of the town for school purposes, and I suppose the number of pupils is much as 75 cents in 75 years, but what is there as an educator in the Hazel Green Academy, originally started by Taylor Day, W. O. Mize and G. B. Swango, and now in the hands of the National Woman's Christian Board of Missions, to whom the founders gave it, after spending \$3,000 or \$4,000 on the buildings and grounds. It is in charge of Prof. W. H. Cord and two assistants and has 153 students, with more in the winter. There is a fine academic building and dormitory, costing in all about \$6,000, and is the best thing in Hazel Green, not even excepting the churches. I might criticize the big tin-looking letters on the boys' caps and suggest smaller and neater ones, but I won't say even that much against so excellent an institution, doing so much valuable service where such service is needed most. There ought to be 500 scholars there instead of 153, and they can bear letters on their caps as big as saucers, so long as it is a sign they are educating themselves and getting out of the old ruts.

Hazel Green is situated on the North-fork of the Red river, which is more fork than river, if water is what counts in rivers, and it is a good business point, with five general stores and two milliner stores, a big saw and grist mill, and Taylor Day building another where flour will be made by the roller process and which will cost in the neighborhood of \$10,000. There are 54 Republicans in town, all black except 4. Mail comes in from the railroads twice a day, or rather 2

mails a day, and it is 36 hours from a daily newspaper, a condition of affairs not common in this great and glorious country of ours within 600 miles of Washington. But that doesn't make much difference, for has not the town that remarkable newspaper and journalistic wonder, Spencer Cooper's famous HAZEL GREEN HERALD, which was the one newspaper which Max O'Rell found to meet his judgment as one of nature's own. For myself, I don't see how "Brer" Cooper has kept that paper going for 10 years, but he has and he owns a commanding site for it, a 10-acre lot for it to spread in and a residence next door on the bluff overlooking the town. THE HERALD is the only newspaper in the county, and some of its cogent and corroborating utterances have gone around the world. It has a circulation of 750 and it made its first appearance on the day that Grover Cleveland was first inaugurated. And "Brer" Cooper was afterward postmaster.

Hazel Green appears to have gone to oratory, for here live J. H. Swango, who has taken nearly all the oratorical prizes in Kentucky and carried off the big one at the World's Fair; Henry Godsey and Jos. Taulbee and other famous prize winners. Jimmie Swango also writes poetry. I know for I have tackled some of it, but he will outgrow this as he grows older.

Hazel Green has some distinguished people in her midst, past and present. G. B. Swango, eight years a judge and now register of the land office; W. O. Mize, ex-state senator and enrolling clerk of the senate; Charles Buchanan, the dead mate shoemaker, who had charge of the exhibit at Chicago, awarded for superior skill; Silas Ratcliff, who died last year, aged 103 years, who voted first for Madison and for every Democratic president since that date, always walking a mile or two to the polls up to the time of his last vote; John Spaniard Nickell who owns a rifle that has killed 500 deer, 300 of them by his own hand, and who can beat a dog trailing any animal in the woods; Uncle Milt Gibbs, aged seventy, a widower 5 times and looking around again; Dave Rose, the wild rider of Wolfe and a lot more I failed to see.

There are no saloons in town, but saddle-bags are plenty and the loss is not keenly felt. In the apple brandy season, when the stranger sees a pair of saddle-bags he knows that relief is near, and he doesn't have to look far to see a pair, either. Springs of mineral water abound, and famous in this section is the Swango spring, now leased by Col. Dye, of Mason county. This water, which, as far as I can learn, has never been analyzed, is very peculiar in its effects and is a cure cure for dyspepsia and half the other ills flesh is heir to. It will straighten out a man ready to have the jim jams and put him on his feet quicker than the Keely cure. It turns everything so black that I believe it will cure gray hair. Sulphate of iron (coppers) is in it strong, and there are magnesia, salts and a variety of other things useful in therapeutics. Whatever there is Swango will make a man eat his head off if he isn't careful. The spring only yields about 30 or 40 gallons a day and the water loses its virtue by shipping it any distance.

Hazel Green wants a railroad, and wants it bad. Coal is abundant, and 11 miles away what is said to be the most extensive coal deposit in the world is awaiting the railroad to carry it to market. There ought to be a railroad, but it must come from the outside, for there isn't money enough in these counties to develop their great riches. The road is bound to get there after awhile, but it ought to be there this very minute.

There were soldiers in Hazel Green in war times, as it was a cross-roads for both armies. John Morgan came in, and I was told of one man who was willing to testify that he had given Gen. Garfield a drink on one occasion, and it wasn't water, either. Another man said it was Gen. Nelson. I don't know which one it was.

There are four doctors in town, and one of them told me his practice extended over five counties. Think of getting up in the middle of the night, you city doctors, and riding over impassable roads into the third county, and then, like as not, get a dollar for it.

Two men were lynched here to a tree now in front of THE HERALD office. Two other men killed their men here later and were swung for it at Campton by due process of law. H. F. Pieratt is postmaster, and he gets \$500 a year out of it.

There are several nice residences in town and a big frame Masonic hall on the hill, but there is no opera-house and but one hotel. Neither is there a telegraph office nor a telephone, and people in Hazel Green are just a little further away from the world than they ought to be. W. O. Mize lives in the only brick house, and Taylor Day has a \$5,000 home.

And here let me say something about the Day brothers, who are the controlling business men of the half dozen counties about the terminus of the L. and E. railway. They

are Nathan, Floyd and John, of Breathitt, and Taylor, of Wolfe, and they are the richest men in the mountains, their interests touching every branch of business. They own 15 stores, thousands of acres of timber and farming lands, saw-mills, grist mills, stock, town property, buildings of all kinds. They handle millions of feet of lumber every year, and they are indefatigable workers. Taylor Day is never still a minute, and he goes with a steam-engine vigor that makes everything hustle. The Hazel Green store sometimes carries as much as \$40,000 worth of goods, and the Jackson store does a business of \$100,000. They are all first-class business men, and never hesitate to spend money when good will come of it, either in private or public. They are known throughout the entire section, and their word is as good as their bond any time and anywhere. It is a remarkable combination, and another like it I have not yet discovered.

I saw a whole bevy of pretty girls at the fair, several bevy for that matter, with pink cheeks and soft eyes and pleasing figures, well-clothed, and I quite went into raptures over them and grew poetic. A custom I noticed was a desire on the part of the youth of the neighborhood to shoot their guns on the streets at night in a manner so reckless that we had to put our lights out so that they might not casually put the light out for us with a 45-calibre bullet. Those youths have a way of shooting at the stars and sometimes a light in a window might be mistaken for a star. It isn't as bad, though, as it used to be. Judge Red. wine, of Breathitt, having taken the matter in hand last year and sent several of the shooters to the jail in Campton, where they are still undergoing reform. The judge is popular and there ought to be more like him.

Hazel Green is a Kentucky town with Louisville papers as its stand-by, the Courier-Journal having the most readers. No magazines are taken except by the academy. The academy library supplies most of the reading matter for the town's folk.

Green Trimble, of Mt. Sterling, lived in Hazel Green for fifty-three years, his father being the founder of the town, and he "kinder hankers" to get back to the old place. He was arrested by the Union forces 13 times during the war and he doesn't get a pension.

A peculiar custom, which is not as prevalent as it used to be is the carrying of a gun in a pair of saddle bags. Every man who comes in from the country brings his saddle bags, and then as he strolls carelessly about town he carries them over his shoulder. Nowadays there is nothing in them more dangerous than a quart of apple brandy, but the revolver used to be there, and the man steadied them across his shoulder with his hand in the pocket gripped on his gun ready for business. One of the surprising features of this mountain gun-carrying practice is that with so many guns carried so comparatively few people are shot.

I have been talking in these letters of the "mountain country." I have done so in deference to common usage rather than in deference to the facts, for none of this country is mountainous. Beattyville, for instance, is only 715 feet above the sea, Jackson, 780, and the highest point on this part of the L. and E. (Torrent) only 800. The L. and E. at Lexington and at Winchester is a few feet in excess of 1,000 feet above sea level, or nearly 300 feet higher than the so-called mountain towns. Only the high hills about these towns are up to the level of the Blue Grass plateau.

In conclusion, I want to say something about a notable product of these counties and the source of them. I might say, if I were on the Prohibition ticket, twit: The products of the distilleries. At this season apple brandy is the fluid made, changing to whiskey in the winter, and there are 40 distilleries in Breathitt, 5 in Lee, 10 in Wolfe, 10 in Perry and 5 in Owsley. Each distillery reports an average of 20 gallons a month. The distiller's word being taken for it, and the tax is paid on that. How much is really made nobody but the distiller knows, but the margin is enough to knock the old-time moonshiner out of business, and he is harder to find than a needle in a haystack. What's the use of taking any risk when the government gives a man all the chance he wants? New apple brandy—the never it is the better it is—(and there's no denying that good apple brandy is powerful good) sells at \$4 a gallon, and the supply rarely exceeds the demand. Another stand-by is sorghum, and when the mountaineer has apple brandy for a beverage and sorghum for a steady diet, he doesn't care a continental for your land that flows with milk and honey. Not much.

An expression I heard frequently in Hazel Green struck me as a good one. I had asked a man if he was going somewhere, and he answered: "I shore am." When I got back to the railroad some ahead me if I had had a pleasant time in Hazel Green, and I couldn't answer more fittingly than "I shore did."

W. J. LAMFON.